

Message Text

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SUBJECT: 1976 SPRING WAGE NEGOTIATIONS: FIRST "WAVE" OF STRIKES

1. SOHYO-AFFILIATED FEDERATION OF PUBLIC CORPORATION UNIONS (KOROKYO), THE PEOPLE THAT BROUGHT JAPAN THE "RIGHT TO STRIKE" STRIKE LAST DECEMBER, LAUNCH MARCH 17 FIRST "WAVE" OF THEIR "SPRING LABOR OFFENSIVE" WITH 24 HOURS STRIKE ON MOST NATIONAL RAILROAD LINES, WORK TO RULE TACTICS ON COMMUTER AND HIGH SPEED BULLET TRAINS AND WALKOUTS IN SELECTED POST AND TELEGRAPH OFFICES. IN ADDITION TO SLOGANS CALLING FOR LARGE ANNUAL WAGE INCREASE OF OVER 20 PERCENT, STRIKES THIS YEAR FOCUSING PRIMARILY ON LOCKHEED SCANDAL AND ON PENALTIES EVIED AGAINST LAST DECEMBER'S STRIKERS. (NOTICEABLY ABSENT IS ANY REFERENCE TO RIGHT TO STRIKE.) NEW NATIONAL RAILWAY PRESIDENT, FORMER FINANCE VICE MINISTER FUMIO TAKAGI (CONSIDERED A HARD-LINER ON LABOR ISSUES), HAS ALREADY WARNED RAIL UNIONS THAT STRICT DISCIPLINARY ACTION WILL AGAIN BE TAKEN AGAINST "ILLEGAL" STRIKERS. SECOND SOHYO-SPONSORED STRIKE WAVE SCHEDULED FOR MARCH 31, WHEN PRIVATE RAILROAD WRKERS EXPECTED TO JOIN WITH PUBLIC CORPORATIN UNIONS, AND THIRD CLIMACTIC SERIES OF STRIKES WILL PROBABLY OCCUR APRIL 6-9.

2. WHILE MEDIA AS USUAL FOCUSIONG OR PUBLIC SECTOR STRIKES, RAL DECISIONS ON THIS YEAR'SHWAGE
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INCREASES CLEARLY BEING MADE BY JAPAN METAL WORKERS

COUNCIL (IMF-JC), WITH STEEL WORKERS (TEKKO ROREN) PRES MIYATA AGAIN PLAYING KEY ROLE. IMF-JC ASST SECGEN MIKI TELLS US THAT IN SPITE OF NIKKEIREN'S AND STEEL MANUFACTURERS PUBLIC INSISTENCE ON SINGLE DIGIT WAGE HIKE AND STEEL WORKERS' CALL FOR 15.3 PERCENT INCREASE, COMPROMISE SETTLEMENT WILL MOST LIKELY BE FIXED AT JUST OVER 10 PERCENT (AVERAGE MONTHLY WAGE INCREASE OF 13,000 - 14,000 YEN - \$43-46), AND REACHED BETWEEN APRIL 10-13. IN ADDITION, ACCORDING TO MIKI, IMF-JC THIS YEAR HOPING THAT FOR FIRST TIME ALL OF ITS AFFILIATES WILL ACCEPT TEKKO ROREN'S LEADERSHIP REQUEST EXACTLY SAME WAGE INCREASE AND DEMAND MANAGEMENT REPLY ON SAME DAY, THEREBY DEMONSTRATING THAT METAL WORKING UNIONS DECISIVELY DETERMINE WAGE PATTERNS IN JAPAN. LEADERS OF AUTO, SHIPBUILDING AND ELECTRICAL MACHINERY FEDERATIONS APPARENTLY AGREE IN PRINCIPLE TO THIS NOVEL APPROACH, BUT THEIR CONSTITUENT UNIONS, WHICH ACTUALLY CONDUCT NEGOTIATIONS ON THE ENTERPRISE LEVEL, STILL SOMEWHAT RELUCTANT TO SACRIFICE THEIR AUTONOMOUS NEGOTIATING POWER FOR SAKE OF IMF-JC UNITY. IMF-JC AFFILIATES MEETING MARCH 19-20 TO REACH FINAL DECISION ON WHETHER TO PURSUE PRECEDENT SETTING UNIFIED NEGOTIATING TACTICS.

3. COMMENT: PROGNOSIS FOR NEXT FEW WEEKS IS FOR STRIKE-FREE WAGE SETTLEMENTS IN MOST OF PRIVATE SECTOR BY MID-APRIL AND SERIES OF SHORT STRIKES IN PUBLIC SECTOR, PARTICULARLY ON RAILROADS, WHICH ARE AIMED AT SAVING SOHYO'S MILITANT IMAGE WHILE CAUSING MINIMUM OF INCONVENIENCE TO COMMUTERS. SINCE SEVERAL SOHYO UNIONS INFILTRATED BY YOUNG FAR LEFT RADICALS, THERE MAY ALSO BE A FEW MORE WELL-PUBLICIZED "HAPPENINGS" SIMILAR TO THE FORCIBLE OCCUPATION OF THE KANSAI EMPLOYER ASSOCIATION HEADQUARTERS, FEB 25 (OSAKA-KOBE 284) WHEN, IN TACTICS REMINISCENT OF CHINESE CULTURAL REVOLUTION AND JAPANESE STUDENT UPHEAVAL OF LATE 1960'S, MANAGEMENT REPS FORCED TO ISSUE STATEMENTS FULLY SUPPORTING MOST EXTREME UNION WAGE DEMANDS.

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4. WHILE PREDICTIONS ARE ALWAYS RISKY, EMBASSY IS INCLINED TO VIEW THAT HIGH UNEMPLOYMENT (CURRENTLY 1.24 MILLION) AND STILL LAGGING ECONOMIC RECOVERY, PLUS THE DEFEAT OF LABOR'S HIGH LEVEL "DEMANDS" IN LAST YEAR'S NEGOTIATIONS, MAKE IT HIGHLY LIKELY THAT WAGE INCREASES THIS YEAR WILL AVERAGE SLIGHTLY OVER (I.E. A FRACTION OF A PERCENTAGE POINT) 10 PERCENT AT MOST.
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